

THANK YOU

DOCTORS AND NURSES



<https://www.freepik.com/free-photos-vectors/medical>">Medical vector created by freepik - www.freepik.com

THANKS ALSO TO

PHARMACISTS, LAB SCIENTISTS,
CLEANERS AND
ALL THOSE
WORKING IN HEALTH CARE

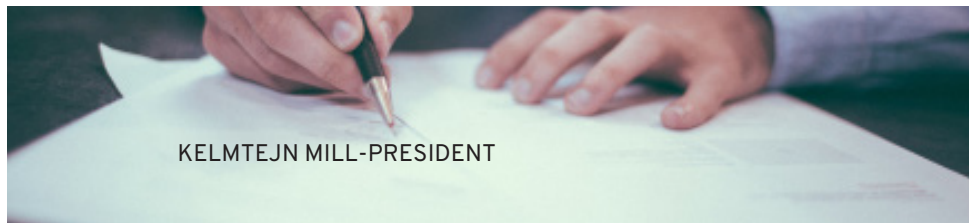
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Affiliated to



Caritas
Malta
Epilepsy
Association

A better life for people with epilepsy



KELMTEJN MILL-PRESIDENT

Għeżież membri,

Nispera li tinsabu tajbin u nispera wkoll li qegħdin tobdu d-direttivi tad-Dipartiment tas-Saħħa.

Bħalma tafu minħabba sitwazzjoni tal-Covid 19 kellna nipposponu l-konferenza li kella ssir ġewwa d-Dolmen Hotel fil-Qawra fl-14 ta' Marzu. Bħalma tafu wkoll minħabba direttivi li qed isehħu lanqas il-laqqgħat tas-soltu ma stajna nagħmlu. Għaldaqs tant, il-laqqgħat imħabbra fin-*newsletters* ta' qabel, għal issa ġew sospizi.

Għalhekk ħsibna li nagħmlu laqqgħa virtwali għal-membri tagħna biex niddiskutu s-sitwazzjoni tal-covid 19. Għalhekk intbagħat avviz lil membri kollha dwar dan. Din il-laqqgħa saret nhar il Ġimgħa 3 t'April permezz ta' Zoom. Għal dan il-għan Professor Janet Mifsud ippreparat 'Powerpoint Presentation' verament iddettaljat kif ukoll interessanti u informattivi ħafna. Dawn kienu jinkludu fejn għandek issib l-għajnuna kif ukoll numri tat-telefon fejn wiehed jista jċempel skond il każ. Din il-laqqgħa ntogħgħot minn dawk prezenti u tagħlbu li ssir oħra mhux fil-bogħod. Aħna nżommukom infurmati permezz ta' emejl meta jkun il-waqt.

Għal benefiċċju ta' dawk li ma ngħaqdux magħna f'dan il-meeting, qegħdin niġbru id-dettalji tal-*presentation* f'forma ta' newsletter li se ssibu hawn taħt.

Nixtieq niġbdilkom l-attenzjoni li d-dettalji li jinsabu ma din in-newsletter jistaw ikunu aġġornati mill-awtoritajiet, għalhekk dejjem zommu ruħħkom informati mad-direttivi li jinħarġu mid-Dipartiment Tas-Saħħa.

Nerga' ntenni sabiex tibqgħu ġewwa għax hekk biss tistaw tbiegħdu il-periklu.

HUDU HSIEB SAHHITKOM.

Frank

CoronaVirus (COVID-19) and Epilepsy

prepared by Janet Mifsud, Advisor CMEA
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The information provided in this presentation is continuously being updated and CMEA & JM are not responsible for any information which may change due to new updates.

What are corona viruses?



- Coronaviruses are viruses which cause respiratory symptoms ranging from the common cold to more serious illnesses such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).
- They are a family of viruses which are present both in humans and in animals.
- **COVID-19** is a new type of these viruses which has never been seen before.

Symptoms of corona virus



FEVER



COUGH



SHORTNESS
OF BREATH

*Symptoms may
appear 2 - 14 days
after exposure

The incubation period, the time between exposure to the virus and the appearance of the first symptoms, can take between 2 to 14 days.

How can I get infected?



- COVID-19 is spread from person to person through respiratory droplets expelled from the nose or mouth when a person who is sick with COVID-19 coughs or sneezes.
- These droplets can persist on objects or surfaces around the person in question.

How the spread of COVID-19?

- To protect yourself and others, practice good hand and respiratory hygiene:
 - Keep a distance of one metre when talking to others and two metres from someone who is sick.
 - Stay at home as much as possible.
 - Avoid crowds and going to places where you come in close contact with other people.
 - Stay away from vulnerable individuals, such as elderly and those with underlying health conditions.

How to wash your hands



What if I develop symptoms?



- **People suffering from symptoms of COVID-19 are advised**
 - Not to go to their doctor, health centre or the emergency department, but should call the COVID-19 helpline on 111.
 - People with symptoms will be assessed on a case-by case basis prior to testing. Testing is done by appointment only.
 - Remain at home.
 - DO NOT go to private clinics, emergency department, health centres, pharmacies or other healthcare facilities.

Is there treatment or a vaccine?

No specific treatment exists yet for COVID-19.

- Treatment given by a medical doctor is supportive and helps to control the symptoms.
- Currently no vaccines against COVID-19.
- Thus it is very important to prevent infection or contain further spread from someone with COVID-19.

Can I get infected from touching money?

- There is a chance of infection through touching money, but it is a very low risk.
- If you want to guard against this risk, minimise your use of cash during these weeks and use a contactless credit or debit card to pay, and practice good hand hygiene.



Some countries fine people if they do not wear masks. So why are you saying we should not wear masks?



- People should avoid wearing masks as they were often not needed and generally tended to make people touch their faces even more than usual.
- In some countries people are being fined if they are already exhibiting symptoms.
- Here in Malta, authorities are telling anyone with symptoms to stay at home and not go out at all.
- If you are coughing or sneezing, dial 111 and do not leave home.



watch
Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78jLBNSqc3g>

Can you get COVID-19 from fruit or jars of food?



There is a minute chance of infection, if an infected person has been in contact with the items. To get rid of that chance, wash your hands as soon as you return home and wipe down your groceries.

If you want to sterilise them, you can use tablets used to sterilise baby bottles. There is a benefit to this: vegetables like lettuce will remain fresh for longer, as you will have rid them of any microbes.

COVID-19 and Epilepsy

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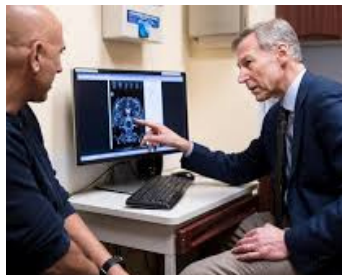
Are people with epilepsy at higher risk of developing COVID-19 (coronavirus)?

- Epilepsy is a “family” of many different disorders that lead to seizures.
- 70% become seizure-free on medication.
- **For these people, epilepsy**
 - does not increase the risk of getting COVID-19
 - does not increase the severity of COVID-19

General advice for persons with epilepsy

- Never discontinue your antiepileptic medication without medical advice.
- Families and patients should go to A&E if absolutely necessary, in order to avoid the risk of people becoming infected.
- If needed call your family doctor or your epilepsy specialist.

Do I have a higher risk of getting the coronavirus if I have epilepsy?



The risk is increased in those persons with weakened immune systems, older people, persons with diabetes, persons with cancer and chronic lung disease. Those most vulnerable may be those with uncontrolled seizures or triggered by fever or infection, If you have concerns, please contact your GP or epilepsy specialist.

Do people with epilepsy have a weakened immune system?

- This occurs only if there are co-existing other health conditions and associated immunosuppressive treatment.
- Some very rare forms of epilepsy are sometimes treated with medicines that also affect their immune system (for example, ACTH, steroids, immunotherapies) may be at greater risk of developing more severe symptoms, with viral illnesses.
- However, these medicines should **NOT** be interrupted.
- A rigorous respect of extra measures to social distancing should be sufficient.
- If you are concerned call your doctor or epilepsy specialist.

What should I do to avoid the infection?

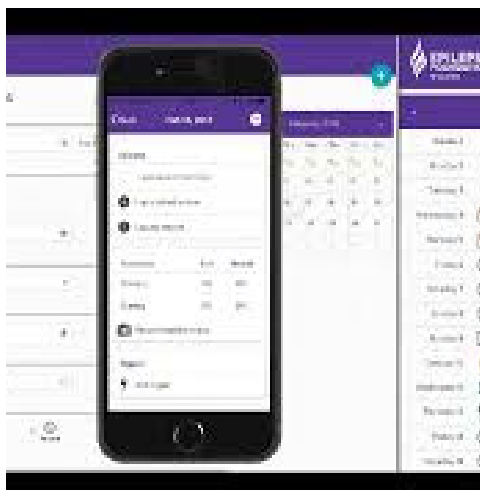
- Usual precautions.
 - Avoid close contact with people who are unwell;
 - Hand hygiene (wash hands with soap and water, or use alcohol hand gel, often, especially after using public transport and at any time before eating);
 - Cover the mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing with a tissue or a sleeve;
 - Try to avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are unclean.
 - Try to keep healthy by following a nutritious diet and taking gentle exercise.
 - Keep your home well ventilated by keeping the window open.

Supply of medicines

- Currently there is no evidence of shortage of supply of antiepileptic medication.
- However, it is best to have a regular supply of medication, do not wait the last day to visit your pharmacist.
- Stockpiling of medication should be discouraged. More than ever, please ensure that you take your antiseizure medicines regularly and that you do not miss doses.
- Also ensure that you keep a healthy lifestyle and avoid factors, such as lack of sleep, that may facilitate the occurrence, or recurrence, of seizures.

Hints for persons with epilepsy

- The risk of worsening seizures with COVID-19 seems low for most people with epilepsy.
- But take precautions
- Avoid usual triggers eg sleep deprivation :
- Be extra careful taking your seizure medicine – don't miss any doses.
- Set reminders on your phone.
- Use sticky notes.
- Have someone remind you when to take medicines or ask if you've taken them.
- Keep handy a list of medications you take.
- Use a checklist to make sure you took them.
- Use a pillbox.
- Use an app like **Texting 4 Control** or a **seizure diary**



Why is staying at home very important?



- Staying at home helps to protect your friends, colleagues and the wider community. It will also help to control the spread of the virus.
- This may be difficult or frustrating, but there are things that you can do to help make it easier.

- Asking friends or family to drop off anything you need or order supplies online.
- Alternatively you can call 21 411 411 for assistance.
- Make sure any deliveries are left outside your home for you to collect.
- Keeping in touch with friends and family over the phone or through social media.
- Keeping yourself busy by cooking, reading, online learning and watching films.
- Taking online classes or courses to help you to exercise in your home.

COVID 19 and public transport

- Malta Public Transport has implemented a number of precautionary measure
- People are kindly requested not to travel if they are feeling sick, and to follow quarantine procedures as indicated by the authorities.
- Standing passengers on board buses will not be allowed.
- Buses are cleaned every night, using special chemicals
- Additional cleaning schedule of the buses during the day, especially in the driver cabin area.
- Personal hand sanitizer bottles to all employees.
- Bus drivers have been instructed to open all windows inside the buses, and to switch off air-conditioning systems,
- A “no change” policy to limit the amount of cash that is exchanged between passengers and drivers.



How can I manage my stress and worry?



- This is a stressful time for everyone.
 - People may be alone or caring for many people at once.
 - Routines are changed or you may not have any routines as things change quickly.
 - Listening to news may be making people more scared of getting sick.
- While we can't prevent all stress, everyone should look at how they are managing it.
 - Chronic stress can lower one's immunity.
 - This may make you more prone to getting sick.
 - Consider different ways to manage stress.

Support in Malta



- Our local neurology teams here in Malta, adult and children, have informed CMEA that they are very willing to give advice either by phone or teleconferencing using WhatsApp or Skype.
- However, if suddenly there is a deterioration in seizure control needing hospital admission, persons with epilepsy/parents/carers can be reassured that the wards in MDH will be clean wards with no COVID-19 patients.
- Contact CMEA on maltaepilepsy@gmail.com

Useful telephone numbers

| Assistance Provided | Telephone numbers/email |
|---|--|
| Health related queries | |
| <i>If you have symptoms If you need to be swabbed, you will be re-contacted and given an appointment at the testing centre in Luqa or Luxol</i> | 111 or 21324086 |
| <i>Primary Health Care helpline</i> | 2122 2444 |
| <i>For queries about appointments at primary health care clinics, or your respective health centre</i> | 21231231; Birkirkara on 2277 4000; Cospicua on 2397 2000; Floriana on 2568 0000; Gzira on 2260 9000; Kirkop on 2334 8000; Mosta on 2269 5000; Paola on 2367 5000; Qormi on 2276 1000; Rabat on 2256 3000. |
| Education related queries | |
| <i>Ministry of Education for schooling or education-related enquiries</i> | 25981000 |
| For Maltese Citizens abroad | |
| <i>Ministry for Foreign Affairs for Maltese nationals who are stuck abroad and need assistance</i> | 22042200 sitcen.mfea@gov.mt |
| For those in quarantine and vulnerable persons | |
| <i>n quarantine and need help e.g. food, medicines</i> | 21411411 |
| <i>For elderly people lacking support who need medicines, ready-made meals or food products (incl. fruit and vegetables),</i> | 25903030 |
| <i>Reporting breaches of quarantine</i> | 22944511/22944504 Quarantine.covid.19@gov.mt |
| / Social and mental support (state and NGOs) | |
| <i>For Social Security Department Administered Financial measures e.g. parental benefit visit</i> | 153 servizz@gov.mt https://socialsecurity.gov.mt/ |
| <i>CRPD for persons with disability</i> | 25903030 (Malta) 21569909 (Gozo) |
| <i>CRPD (hearing impairment)</i> | remote.assist@crpd.org.mt |
| <i>Foundation for Social Welfare Services and Institute for Family Therapy (helpline for lonely elderly)</i> | 1772 |

Useful telephone numbers

| Assistance Provided | Telephone numbers/email |
|---|---|
| Health related queries | |
| <i>Free helpline for mental well being</i> | 9932 0977, from 9m to 7pm on Monday through Saturday |
| <i>Richmond Foundation (for those with mental problems)</i> | 1770 (Monday to Friday) |
| <i>Caritas Malta</i> | 7921 3480, 7921 3479, 7921 3482, 9912 2515. help@caritasmalta.org |
| <i>Victim Support Malta</i> | 21228333 |
| <i>Social Work Unit Gozo</i> | 2155 6630 |
| <i>Dar Emmaus</i> | 2155 2390; |
| <i>Mental Health Malta</i> | 2330 4313 |
| <i>Dar Merħba Bik</i> | 2144 0035 |
| <i>SOAR Support Group</i> | 2180 8981 |
| <i>Rainbow Support Service (LGBTIQ) on</i> | 2143 0009 |
| <i>Fondazzjoni Dar il-Hena</i> | 2788 8211 |
| <i>Programm Sebh – Dar Qalb ta' Ġesu</i> | 2148 2504 |
| <i>Womens Rights Foundation</i> | 7970 8615 |
| Health related queries/Business support | |
| <i>For Business Support</i> | 144 covid@maltaenterprise.com |
| <i>For employees to ask about wages and employment conditions</i> | 1575 |
| <i>For employers to ask about wages and employment conditions</i> | 1576 |
| <i>For hoteliers and tourists who have queries about the announced measures</i> | .2169244 |
| <i>For those who work in the gaming industry</i> | 25469111 |

Other sources of information (these are being continuously updated)

For general medical and related advice in Malta

- <https://covid19malta.info/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/covid19malta/>

International League Against Epilepsy

- <https://www.ilae.org/patient-care/covid-19-and-epilepsy>

Epilepsy Action UK

- <https://www.epilepsy.org.uk/info/daily-life/safety/coronavirus-covid-19>

Epilepsy Foundation USA

- <https://www.epilepsy.com/article/2020/3/concerns-about-covid-19-coronavirus-and-epilepsy>

Epilepsy Scotland

- <https://www.epilepsyscotland.org.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-what-you-need-to-know-if-you-have-epilepsy/>

Thank you and keep safe

THE COMMITTEE - CARITAS MALTA EPILEPSY ASSOCIATION